

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 SS-15 EUR-12 PM-04 NSC-05 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 ACDA-07 MC-02 AID-05 /070 R

DRAFTED BY ARA:HWSHLAUDEMAN:JN

APPROVED BY ARA:HWSHLAUDEMAN

S/P:LEINAUDI

ARA/AND:AFULLER

ARA/AND:RDRISCOLL

ARA/AND:RPACE

T -CMAW (SUBSTANCE)

S/S-O:RMPERITO

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R 100129Z SEP 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

S E C R E T STATE 224065

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, MASS, SHUM, PE, CI

SUBJECT: CHILE AND THE PERUVIAN ARMS PURCHASE OF SOVIET

AIRCRAFT

REF: SANTIAGO 8740

1. THE CHILEANS "ASTUTE" HANDLING OF THIS ISSUE ADDS UP TO A RELIANCE ON US SOMEHOW TO STOP THE PURCHASE. THEIR SENSITIVITY ABOUT BEING IN A DISADVANTAGED POSITION AND FEAR OF GIVING THE GOP REASON TO STALL THE TALKS ON THE BOLIVIA CORRIDOR (WHICH THE GOP WILL STALL ANYWAY) SEEM A WEAK RATIONALE FOR MAKING NO OTHER EFFORT ON AN ISSUE THAT VITALLY AFFECTS THEIR SECURITY. BUT WE HAVE LITTLE

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DOUBT THAT YOUR ANALYSIS IS CORRECT.

2. THE PERUVIANS WILL BE IN A GOOD POSITION TO CLAIM THAT THE SU-22 IS NO REAL CAUSE FOR CONCERN, INASMUCH AS EVEN THE CHILEANS FAILED TO COMPLAIN. AS IN THE CASE OF THE SOVIET TANKS, THE ABSENCE OF A PUBLIC OUTCRY FROM ITS NEIGHBORS WILL ALLOW PERU TO BURY THE MATTER QUICKLY, WHILE THE BUILDUP GOES ON. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT A DIRECT CHILEAN APPROACH TO THE GOP RISKS LITTLE AND WOULD BE USEFUL BACKGROUND TO OUR OWN EFFORTS TO DISCOURAGE THE BUILDUP.

3. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT THE EMBASSY HAS IN MIND IN REFERRING TO A "HARD DECISION TO ACT." THE PERUVIANS ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS AS TO HOW WE VIEW THE CONTEMPLATED PURCHASE. UNDER-SECRETARY MAW WILL RAISE THE PROBLEM AGAIN DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO LIMA. DOES THE EMBASSY CONTEMPLATE SOME OTHER ACTION?

4. THE POINT ABOUT MAKING NO COUNTER OFFER TO PERU IS ALSO RATHER UNCLEAR. IS IT YOUR JUDGMENT THAT THE GOC WOULD OPPOSE SUCH AN OFFER IF THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE WERE THE SU-22?

5. FOR LA PAZ: DO YOU SEE ANY USEFUL OPPORTUNITY THERE TO ENCOURAGE THE BOLIVIANS TO CONVOKE THE THIRD ROUND OF ARMS TALKS? DO RECENT EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN BY VARIOUS BOLIVIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS OVER A DEVELOPING SUB-REGIONAL ARMS RACE REFLECT THE VIEWS OF PRESIDENT BANZER AS WELL? IF SO, WHAT NEW MOVES MAY LA PAZ BE CONTEMPLATING? WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN RECENT REPORTS THAT BOLIVIA MAY CREATE A "NATIONAL DEFENSE FUND" AND WHAT THIS PORTENDS FOR FUTURE BOLIVIAN ARMS ACQUISITIONS. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PROCUREMENT, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 SEP 1976
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE224065
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: HWSHLAUDEMAN:JN
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760342-0044
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760972/aaaacjkt.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 SANTIAGO 8740
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JUL 2004 by ellisob>; APPROVED <22 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHILE AND THE PERUVIAN ARMS PURCHASE OF SOVIET AIRCRAFT
TAGS: PARM, MASS, SHUM, PE, CI, UR, US
To: SANTIAGO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006